Abuse of Individuals at Risk: An Overview

Wisconsin

Department of Health Services, Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources
Overview

- What is abuse, neglect, and exploitation
- Who is abused
- Types of abuse
- Who are abusers
- Where abuse occurs
Overview

- County reporting system
- Types of reporters
- Who to call, when
- Closing comments
What is Abuse?

- Intentional or neglectful act, omission
- Caregiver, family member, other trusted person
- Results in, may result in harm to an individual
Who is Abused?

- Men, women
- All ages, races, cultures, religions, socioeconomic groups
- Reduced capacity to care for self/dependency on others
What is Abuse?

- How harm occurs
  - Unintentional
  - Intentional
  - Self neglect
What is Abuse?

- Unintentional harm
  - Accidental
    - Harm suffered in “accident” may not fit explanation
  - Ill equipped caregiver
  - Uncontrollable aggressive behavior by individual
What is Abuse?

- Intentional harm
  - Power and control
  - Purposeful
  - Pattern of behavior
  - Abuser may manipulate others in relationship with individual
What is Abuse?

- Self neglect
  - Individual fails to provide for own needs
  - No abuser
Types of Abuse

- Abuse
  - Physical
  - Emotional
  - Sexual
  - Confinement/restraint
  - Treatment without consent
Types of Abuse

- Financial exploitation
- Neglect
- Self neglect
Physical Abuse

- Intentional act
- Results in physical pain, injury, impairment
- How it occurs
  - Physical assaults
  - Other
Signs of Physical Abuse

- Obvious (bruises, broken bones, burns, etc.)
  - Broken eyeglasses, hearing aids, devices
- Injuries not properly cared for; repeated, unexplained
Signs of Physical Abuse

- Frequent use of emergency room, hospital care
- Actions to prevent discovery of abuse
  - Access denied to communication, mobility aids
  - Doctor “hopping”
Emotional Abuse

- Intentional use of language, behavior
- Intimidate, humiliate, ridicule, threaten, frighten, harass, coerce, blame
- Results in emotional pain, distress
- Non-verbal forms
Signs of Emotional Abuse

- Individual behaviors
  - Helpless, withdrawn, non-responsive
  - Agitated, fearful
  - Blames self
Signs of Emotional Abuse

- Abuser behaviors
  - Yells, threatens, belittles
  - Speaks for, controls individual
  - Threatens to institutionalize
  - Threatens to harm, kill animals
Sexual Abuse

- Non-consensual sexual contact of any kind
  - OR when individual incapable of giving consent

- Categories
  - Hands off
  - Hands on
  - Harmful genital practices
Sexual Abuse

- Other facts
  - Persons with developmental disabilities especially vulnerable
  - Most perpetrators are men
Signs of Sexual Abuse

- Bruises
- STDs, infections
- Bleeding, pain, itching
- Underclothing torn, bloody, stained
- Walking, sitting difficult
- Verbal account of incident
Other Types of Abuse

- Confinement
- Restraint
- Treatment without consent
Financial Exploitation

- Illegal or improper use of funds, assets, or property
  - How it occurs
- Victims most likely to be elderly adults
Signs of Financial Exploitation

- Changes in bank account
- Disappearance of funds, possessions
- Transfer of assets
- Changes to will, powers of attorney
- Cost of care more important than quality
Neglect

- Refusal to provide individual with life necessities
- Intentional, unintentional
  - Be cautious where excuses made in cases of suspected neglect
Signs of Neglect

- Individual’s appearance
- Food inadequate, spoiled
- Unsafe, unclean living conditions
- Lack of medical equipment
Self-Neglect

- Retains responsibility for own care, but fails to provide for needs
- Exception for competent persons who make voluntary, informed choices
- Signs of neglect, self-neglect often, but not always, similar
Abusers

- Who they are
- Justify abuse, try to hide evidence
- Caregiver risk factors
Where Abuse Occurs

- Home
- Regulated facilities, community settings
Reporting System

- County agencies
  - Elder adult at risk
  - Adult at risk
  - Adult protective services
- Collectively, county APS unit
- Agency responsibilities
Types of Reporters

- Voluntary reporters
- Limited required reporters
- Caregiver misconduct reporting system
Who to Call, When

- Law enforcement, 911
  - Life threatening, immediate danger
- County agency
- DHS, Division of Quality Assurance
Aging & Disability Resource Centers

- Your role
- Connection with colleagues
- Questions
- Thank you
Presenters

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